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TAGS: [EINT](#) [ECON](#) [KIPR](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: DIRECTOR OF STATE COUNCIL INFORMATION OFFICE MEETS
CONGRESSMEN KIRK AND LARSEN

REF: (A) Beijing 1473; Beijing 1482

(U) This cable is Sensitive but Unclassified (SBU) and for official use only. Not for transmission outside USG channels.

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Representatives Mark Kirk (D-IL) and Rick Larsen (R-IL) met on June 1 with Wang Chen, Director of the State Council Information Office(SCIO), to discuss issues related to open access to information in China. The Congressmen specifically raised censorship of Voice of America (VOA) radio broadcasts in China and the continued blocking by the Chinese government of Google's YouTube video-sharing website. Wang welcomed foreign media reporting about China, noted a pre-Olympics decree that continues to allow foreign media greater access in China, and touted the country's "fully open" Internet. However, he also said that "untrue" media reports and all Chinese language websites remain subject to relevant rules and regulations. Wang did not give clear answers on either the VOA or YouTube issue, but did ask that Kirk and Larsen convey to Congress that Chinese hackers are unfairly blamed by the U.S. and other countries for cyber attacks. Wang also lamented biased U.S. reporting and indicated China's interest in establishing a global news network - la CNN to bring the message of China's harmonious development to the world. Wang ended the meeting with a plea for more opportunities for bilateral media and cultural exchanges. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Congressman Kirk raised the issue of Voice of America (VOA) radio transmissions, which are currently blocked in China (VOA's website is also blocked, and there is a prohibition against the broadcasting of VOA material on Chinese television). Kirk indicated that Chinese radio stations are currently prohibited from using VOA broadcasts without requesting permission from the Chinese government because VOA is a quasi state-owned organization. Kirk said that as little as two percent of VOA news programming could be considered sensitive, and suggested that Chinese radio stations be allowed to freely use VOA content unless explicitly told not to.

¶3. (SBU) Wang responded that the SCIO welcomes foreign media reporting on China and Chinese development, and is happy to provide services to foreign reporters. He cited Decree 477, issued prior to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, which allowed foreign journalists to conduct interviews in China without the advance consent of the Chinese government. Wang said the decree was widely praised by foreign journalists, and was therefore reinstated as Decree 537 when it expired on October 17, 2008. The new decree, he said, inherited both the practice and spirit of Decree 477 and, based on a survey of 800 journalists, has also been well received. Foreign journalists, Wang said, can still freely conduct interviews in and file reports from China. Voice of America, he said, has reported about sensitive people in China, which indicates the government is open to such interviews and reporting. Wang said foreign language websites won't have a problem using VOA material, but that Chinese language websites and any stories that are deemed "untrue" are subject to relevant Chinese rules and regulations.

¶4. (SBU) Kirk also raised the question of China's ongoing blocking of Google's YouTube video sharing website in China, and asked whether at least partial access to the popular website would be possible. Wang replied that the company is currently in negotiations with relevant authorities, but said he was unsure of the status of those talks. Wang went on to raise three points. First, he stressed that China's Internet is fully open. It was introduced in China, he said, in 1994, and has grown quickly to more than 300 million users and 2.4 million websites. Sites operated by news agency Xinhua, he noted, have such large amounts of content that it would be impossible to read it all. These examples of growth, he said, would not be possible in an online environment that was not open. Second, Wang said that China's administration of the Internet takes place in strict accordance with relevant Chinese laws and regulations, including China's constitution, in order to combat online crime, pornography, money laundering, and gambling. Referencing President Obama's recent establishment of a White House Cyber Czar, Wang complained that foreign countries victimized by cyber attacks too often blame Chinese hackers. Wang countered that Chinese hackers are small in number and are not sophisticated, and asked Kirk and Larsen to use their influence to convey this message in Washington. Finally, Wang indicated SCIO's interest in exchanging views on the Internet with U.S. and other foreign businesses and governments, and pointed to ongoing cooperation in this area. He referenced the annual U.S.-China Internet Summit, co-hosted by SCIO and Microsoft, as well as a similar event held with U.K. counterparts.

¶5. (SBU) Larsen asked Wang about his perception of U.S. media coverage of China, to which Wang responded with three points. First, he said, the United States is the world's only superpower and has a very developed media industry. Wang said he is happy that the

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U.S. media focuses on China, and welcomes them to China. Second, he said his feelings about the coverage of U.S. media were mixed because while reporting that is "objective, truthful, and friendly" can be helpful, biased, fabricated reporting is damaging. Wang lamented that while China seeks to clarify such harmful reporting, it does not have any influence over the U.S. media. Third, he added that China hopes to expand its influence in the global media to better explain China's harmonious and peaceful development, which he said "by no means will harm others." To expand its influence and explain that China's development will benefit all, including Americans, he said he hoped that China could establish "its own CNN or New York Times."

¶6. (SBU) Wang suggested that Representatives Kirk and Larsen, as co-chairs of the Congressional U.S.-China Working Group, consider promoting more bilateral media and cultural exchanges to complement the productive economic cooperation that already exists between the two countries. Wang said the SCIO would support such initiatives, and asked that the Congress make more such efforts. For example, Wang said, China is developing a number of musicals and would benefit from learning more about Broadway productions in the United States.

¶7. (U) Representatives Kirk and Larsen did not have the opportunity to clear this message before departing.

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